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ABSTRACT

Surveyed were the program planning processes employed by 40 New Jersey schools in establishing resource rooms as alternatives to self-contained special classes for handicapped children. Responses to questionnaire items indicated that a majority of the schools surveyed did not formally evaluate their previous self-contained program to determine its efficacy, that change to a resource room model was usually suggested by a child study team, that regular and special class teachers had little input in developing the resource room model in their school, and that no set pattern for resource room planning was evidenced. (LH)

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RESOURCE ROOM APPROACH

TO

MAINSTREAMING

Survey of Program Planning

by

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Resource Room Approach to Mainstreaming

SURVEY OF PROGRAM PLANNING

Resource rooms programs for mainstreaming special education students have sprung up throughout the southern New Jersey Region. Numerous programs have been implemented within the past two years.

The purpose of this report is to provide the educational planner with information regarding the general planning processes utilized by districts in implementing resource room programs, and hopefully provide a basis for decision-making by the educational planner.

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INTRODUCTION

Title 18A, Chapter 46 of the New Jersey School Code requires each local public school district to identify and classify all handicapped children between the ages of five and twenty, and to provide an appropriate educational program for them.[1]

Basically, the educational program for handicapped children has been administered through the self-contained classroom model. Children have been grouped in classes according to their major handicap, and limits have been established concerning the number of children allowed per teacher.

The rationale behind this placement is not difficult to understand -- protected from having to compete with their more able peers, provided with a curriculum tailored to their needs, and taught by certified, professionally trained teachers, handicapped children should attain their highest potential. However, many educators in the field of special education contend that the self-contained model limits the potential of handicapped children in terms of their academic, social, and emotional needs. Johnson summarizes the present situation as a "paradox" in education:

> It is indeed paradoxical that mentally handicapped children -- having teachers especially trained, having more money spent (per capita) on their education, and being designed to provide for their unique needs, should be accomplishing the objectives of their education at the same or lower level than similar mentally handicapped children who have not had those advantages and have been forced to remain in the regular grades.[2]

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1. Carl L. Marburger, Rules and Regulations Pursuant to Title 18A, Chapter 46, New Jersey Statutes. (Trenton, New Jersey Department of Education, 225 W. State St., June 25, 1970), p. 1.

2. G. O. Johnson, "Special Education for the Mentally Handicapped -- a Paradox," Exceptional Children, (October, 1962), p. 66.

Special educators are beginning to respond to this "paradox" by initiating programs which offer "alternatives" to the self-contained classroom. One such "alternative" is the resource room approach which offers both special and regular classroom worlds to children classified according to procedures outline in Title 18. Schools across the state are implementing the resource room model as a flexible means to integrate handicapped children according to their unique strengths and weaknesses.

Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of the study was to survey the developmental processes employed by districts in establishing resource rooms programs for handicapped children in southern New Jersey.

Forty-eight questionnaires were sent to individual schools in Southern New Jersey identified as having ongoing resource rooms for handicapped children. Of the forty-eight questionnaires sent to the participants in the project, forty were returned, which constitutes eighty-three (83) percent.

Findings of the Survey

Reflecting on the initial decision for abandoning the self-contained model, twenty of the forty schools in the project stated that either the child study team or the school administration were dissatisfied with the self-contained model. Parents or parent groups did not pressure the schools at all to bring about change, although in two school districts parents did suggest that some other method of educating handicapped youths be used. Only eleven of the responding schools indicated that part of the decision to abolish self-contained special classes was due to the ineffectiveness of

the present program as evidenced by the past performance of pupils. The evaluation of their present program was primarily based upon an analyzation of child study team reports and student cumulative folders. A majority of the schools did not in any formal manner evaluate the effectiveness of their existing self-contained model. In comparison, responses to questionnaire items indicated that feelings, attitudes and impressions of teachers and professionals in the field of special education served as the primary basis for determining the inadequacy of the self-contained model.

The group most involved in suggesting that the self-contained model was inadequate was the child study team. Less than fifty percent of the school administrators and special education teachers suggested that a change was needed. Interestingly, two schools reported that the regular classroom teachers in some way suggested dissatisfaction with the self-contained system.

Twelve schools reported that the special education teachers suggested that the self-contained model was not necessarily the best, and twenty-four schools stated that their special education teachers agreed to this. Additional impetus regarding the decision to abandon to whatever degree feasible the self-contained model came from the county offices of education. Many of the county supervisors of child study had suggested to school districts that a new special education model should be employed. Frequently this was done in agreement with other interested groups such as the child study team or the special education teachers.

Once the initial decision had been made to implement the resource room model district initiated the planning process.

In many cases, the planning process was only superficially considered.

Seventeen of the forty schools involved special education teachers in the actual plan development. Conversely, twenty-three schools developed resource rooms without the input and participation of the professional staff expected to teach in the new situation. Regular classroom teachers were involved in only one district regarding the developmental process for the resource room program. In twenty-seven schools, the county or local child study team participated on the "change team" responsible for development of the resource room. In twelve of the twenty-seven schools mentioned above, the child study team alone was totally responsible for planning the resource room. No specific combination of change team personnel was utilized by the majority of schools. The most frequent combination appeared in twelve schools and consisted of at least the child study team and the special education teachers.

Before initiating a resource room, thirty-six schools explored other possible alternatives. The Winslow Township, New Jersey, project was investigated by thirty schools while ten schools responded to exploring the possibility of the Madison Plan. Eight schools considered eliminating their self-contained class and sending their children to other districts. The Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teacher Model and the Helping Teacher Program were each considered by two districts. In reporting the combination of alternatives, there is no definite trend, although the Winslow Plan and/or the Madison

Plan were identified most often when more than one alternative was considered.

In exploring the types of available alternatives to the self-contained model, twenty-six schools stated that visitations were made to other schools having resource rooms; twenty-four schools indicated staff attendance at workshops or conferences; seventeen schools had their staff initiate a careful review of the literature in this area of special education; thirteen schools consulted with the Educational Improvement Center in Pitman, New Jersey; and one school initiated consultation with a college which offers a program in special education. Thirty-seven schools employed a combination of the above with visitations and conference attendance appearing in all thirty-seven combinations. Three schools indicated that nothing was initiated in terms of exploring the alternatives available to them. General criteria for the final plan selection was considered by the school districts. All of the responding districts stated that a change from the self-contained model must allow for the maximum social and academic integration of classified children with their peers. Thirty-two schools included individual instruction as an integral part of the new program. Twenty-one schools felt that guidance should be provided for the children and that the plan must be feasible in terms of economic resources and building facilities. Maximizing the effectiveness of the special education teacher was a considered criteria by twenty-three schools. Thirteen schools responded that all of the aforementioned criteria was considered. All other combinations were insignificant in terms of numbers, although it should be mentioned that thirty-six of the forty schools did use some combination of factors in con-

sidering the criteria for the resource room. In considering the types or classification of students to be included in the resource room, most of the schools indicated their program would include multi-classifications. Thirty-one schools planned to include at least three or more types of classified children. Twenty schools had either three classifications per resource room or five per resource room. Two schools stated that their resource room was limited to one classification. The specific classifications planned for the resource rooms included educable mentally retarded -- thirty-two schools; perceptually impaired -- thirty-two schools; emotionally disturbed -- twenty-six schools; neurologically impaired -- twenty-three schools; socially maladjusted -- seventeen schools; non-classified students -- thirteen schools; physically handicapped -- four schools; and communications handicapped -- two schools.

One of the most important aspects of resource room planning is the development of goals or objectives to be established and achieved. To develop and implement an instructional model which would attack some of the learning problems of children was an objective of twenty-one schools. Thirty schools desired to implement a plan which would provide an organizational pattern whereby handicapped pupils could remain in a regular classroom and be scheduled to a resource room for clinical teaching. Twenty-three schools wished to achieve the goal of special and regular classroom teacher involvement through cooperative planning. Seventeen schools included as an objective the determination of the value of the resource room by the overall achievement of handicapped children. Each of the following objectives were

considered closely related to the objectives planned in the resource rooms of ten schools: to provide a model wherein one special education teacher could deal with the learning problems of from ten to thirty pupils; and to provide a continuous in-service program for the regular classroom teachers and other school personnel.

To determine the value of a resource room in terms of successful objective implementation and achievement, various instructional and evaluative techniques and strategies were planned by schools. Listed below are types of instructional and evaluative techniques or strategies and the number of schools using each.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND EVALUATIVE TECHNIQUES

Techniques	Responses
Diagnostic and Prescriptive Teaching	35
Behavior Modification	30
Limited Use of Self-Contained Classroom Concept	15
Individualized Instruction	37
Small Group Instruction	34
Individual Guidance Sessions	15
Group Guidance Sessions	8
Pre and Post Achievement Testing	23
Reactions of Parents through Questionnaire	16
Yearly Assessment of all Involved Professional Personnel	3
Planned Assessment by Professionals from other schools	5
Daily Individual Lesson Plans	30
Weekly Individual Lesson Plans	20
Daily Planning Time for Resource Room Teachers	20
Time for Resource Room Teachers to Visit Regular Classrooms	5
Planning Time for Regular and Special Teachers	17

Of equal importance in an evaluation process of the resource room is the assessment of student needs and the evaluation of the program in terms of its ability to facilitate the remediation of learning disabilities. Twenty-eight districts utilize a diagnostic testing program to determine students' strengths and weaknesses. This type of testing is done by the resource room personnel as a continuous record of the child's progress. The following list is indicative of the tests most widely used by schools and the number of schools using each test.

EVALUATIVE TESTS

Name of Test	Schools Using Test
Early Detection Inventory	5
Wide Range Achievement Test	14
Key Math	20
Noonan-Spradley	2
Peabody Achievement Test	20
Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulties	11
Botel Reading Inventory	2
McCracken Reading Test	2
Individual or Group Phonics Inventory	16

Considering other types of evaluations and reporting, thirty-four schools have parent-teacher conferences and twenty schools use report cards. Daily anecdotal comments or reports are utilized for student evaluation by seventeen schools while thirty-seven schools implemented resource and regular classroom teacher conferences. Eight schools used all of the above methods to evaluate students. The combination of diagnostic testing, parent-teacher conferences, report cards, and teacher conferences was the only other significantly used combination and it was reported by seven schools.

The evaluation of the professional and non-professional staff working in the resource room is the duty of the principal in thirty-five schools. The chairman of the child study team takes part in this process in twenty schools while this responsibility is shared by the coordinator of special education in eighteen schools. Three schools reported self-evaluation while nine schools utilized peer evaluation. In no case was peer evaluation or self-evaluation the sole evaluative tool used in the teacher evaluation process.

In terms of the subject matter taught in the resource room, all schools concentrated on math and language arts. Thirty-four schools included perceptual training and fourteen adaptive physical education for handicapped children. Twenty-eight schools helped students in other areas in which the child was having trouble in the regular classroom.

Approval for the program by both the local school board and the county child study team supervisor was received by all schools. In terms of the instructional staff, thirty-five schools stated that the teachers were certified as "Teachers of the Handicapped" as prescribed by New Jersey school law. Twenty-four schools used non-professional instructional help and nineteen schools employed paid para-professionals. Tutors from within the schools were a part of the program in nineteen schools while student teachers from nearby colleges were utilized in fourteen resource rooms.

In-service sessions to prepare all staff members was conducted in thirty schools and in thirty-eight cases parents were informed about the resource room before it was implemented.

Concerning the physical aspect of the resource room, thirty schools

indicated that the existing facilities were adequate. Thirty-seven resource rooms indicated it was necessary to purchase additional instructional material and equipment over and beyond the normal yearly supplies. Thirty-three resource rooms inventoried their materials and made them available for use by all professional staff.

Summary and Conclusions

An analysis of the data collected from the forty schools indicates that no set pattern of planning can be determined since schools did whatever they felt was necessary to implement resource rooms. It should be noted that although there is no "correct" method of implementing a resource room, at the time when most resource rooms in the project were established, very little had been written suggesting steps to take in the organization of such programs. Even as this study was being conducted, the state Department of Education has not issued definite guidelines to aid in the developmental aspects of resource rooms.

Recommendations

Unfortunately, most schools did not evaluate their self-contained program to determine its present and/or future importance in the special education program. Many of the decisions were made the successful implementation of resource rooms in other districts.

Before the decision is made to abolish the special class model, schools should thoroughly investigate the actual academic and social growth of the students in all possible situations. Obviously, there are some handicapped children who need a self-contained atmosphere while others can benefit

from integration with the regular class with supplemental help. The individuality of each student should be the determining factor that necessitates the establishment of alternative services. If the self-contained model is beneficial in terms of students' needs, it should be retained along with whatever else might be of help.

The data also revealed that the teachers most affected by the resource room concept -- regular and special class teachers -- had very little input into the development of this model. Without some form of cooperative planning, the probability of successful implementation is reduced.

The writer feels that the implications of each question used in the questionnaire could effectively serve as a guide for the schools planning to implement resource rooms in the near future. There are many factors which determine the success of innovative school programs, however, proper planning will greatly increase the margin of success over failure. With this thought in mind, schools should proceed to implement programs in special education which indicate comprehensive, realistic planning and provide alternatives for the individuality of special education students. The "either or" approach to special education program planning should be abandoned.

APPENDIX

DISTRICT _____ COUNTY _____

SCHOOL _____

GRADE LEVELS IN SCHOOL _____

NUMBER OF PUPILS USING RESOURCE ROOM _____

NUMBER OF RESOURCE ROOM TEACHERS _____

PART 1

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the letter(s) of the most appropriate response. More than one response may be circled if it applies to your resource room.

1. How did your school arrive at the decision that the self-contained concept was inadequate?
   A. An evaluation of the present program was made based on research data obtained from child study team evaluations, cumulative folders, etc., of children from past years.
   B. An evaluation of the present program (self-contained) based on the personal experiences and impressions of special education teachers and/or other professional personnel.
   C. Pressure from parents or parent groups.
   D. It was an administrative decision initiated by the administration or child study team.
   E. It appeared to be the progressive course of action in special education.

2. Who suggested that the self-contained model was not necessarily the best model for your school?
   A. Child Study Team.
   B. School Administration
   C. Parents
   D. Special Education teacher(s)
   E. Regular classroom teachers
   F. County office
   G. Other _____

3. Who agreed that the self-contained model was not necessarily the best model for your school?
   A. Child Study Team
   B. School Administration
   C. Parents
   D. Special Education teacher(s)

E. Regular classroom teachers
F. County office
G. Other _____

4. Before initiating the resource room, which of the following models were explored as possible alternatives?
   A. The North Sacramento Project
   B. The Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teacher Model developed by Dr. Robert Prouty.
   C. The Helping Teacher Program
   D. The Madison Plan
   E. The Winslow Project
   F. Total segregation
   G. Dropping the self-contained class and sending children to other districts.
   H. Other _____

5. In exploring the types of alternatives available, which, if any, of the following steps were taken?
   A. Consultation was initiated with a college which offers a program in special education.
   B. Consultation was initiated with the Educational Improvement Center.
   C. Staff members made a careful review of the literature in this particular area of special education.
   D. Visitations were made to other school districts.
   E. Staff attended workshops/conferences.
   F. Other _____

6. Which of the following statements would you consider as criteria for the final plan selection?
   A. The plan must allow for the maximum social and academic integration of special education students with other students.
   B. Individual instruction must be an integral part of the program.
   C. Guidance must be provided for the children.
   D. The plan must be feasible in terms of economic resources and building facilities.
   E. The plan should maximize the effectiveness of the special education teacher(s)
   F. Other _____

7. Which of the following were most responsible for the development of the resource room model?
   A. Special education teachers
   B. Regular classroom teachers
   C. Child Study Team
   D. School administration
   E. Parents
   F. School Board members
   G. Consultation from other sources
   H. Other _____

8. Which classifications were considered in planning the resource room?
   A. Educable Mentally Retarded
   B. Perceptually Impaired
   C. Neurologically Impaired
   D. Emotionally Disturbed
   E. Socially Maladjusted
   F. Communications Handicapped
   G. Non-classified students
   H. Other _____

9. Which of the following may be considered closely related to the objectives of your resource room?
   A. Develop and implement an instructional model which would attack some of the learning problems of children.
   B. Provide an organizational pattern whereby handicapped pupils could remain in a regular classroom and be scheduled to a resource room for clinical teaching.
   C. Involve special education and regular classroom teachers, through cooperative planning, in the use of diagnostic tools, teaching methods and materials, and continuous assessment procedures.
   D. Provide a model wherein one special education teacher could deal with the learning problems of from 15 to 30 (or more) pupils.
   E. Provide a continuous in-service program for the regular classroom teachers and other school personnel.
   F. Determine if the value of a resource room approach could be demonstrated by the over-all achievement of handicapped children.
   G. Other _____
   _____

10. Which of the following instructional techniques and strategies were planned for the resource room?
   A. Diagnostic and prescriptive teaching
   B. Behavior modification
   C. Precision teaching
   D. Individual instruction
   E. Small group instruction
   F. Large group instruction
   G. Individual guidance sessions
   H. Group guidance sessions

11. Which of the following are an integral part of the student evaluation process?
   A. Pre and post testing (yearly)
   B. Parent-teacher conferences
   C. Daily anecdotal comments or reports
   D. Report cards.
   E. Resource room and regular teacher conferences.
   F. Other _____

12. Which of the following are an integral part of the resource room evaluation?

A. Yearly pre and post testing of students' achievement.
B. Reactions from parents through questionnaires or other means.
C. Yearly assessments by all involved professional personnel.
D. Planned assessments of program by teachers or administrators from other districts, colleges, etc.
E. Other _____

13. Which of the following is used by the resource room personnel to assess student needs and achievement?

A. Early Detection Inventory
B. Wide Range Achievement Test (W.R.A.T.)
C. Key Math Diagnostic Test
D. Noonan-Spradley Diagnostic Program
E. Group or Individual Phonic's Inventory
F. Peabody Individual Achievement Test
G. Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulties
H. Other _____

14. Which of the following were planned as part of the resource room?

A. Daily prescriptive lesson plans for each child
B. Weekly individual lesson plans
C. Planning time each day for resource room teacher(s)
D. A specified period of time for resource room teacher to visit regular classrooms.
E. Planned period of time for resource and regular classroom teachers to meet and plan for children.
F. A continuation of the self-contained concept for some children.

15. Who evaluates the performance of resource room teachers and other personnel working in the resource room?

A. Principal
B. Coordinator or director of special education
C. Chairman of the Child Study Team
D. Peer evaluation
E. Self-evaluation
F. Other _____

16. Which of the following areas are taught in the resource room?

A. Language Arts (Reading, Writing, English grammar and usage).
B. Arithmetic (Basic processes, Time, Measurement, Money, Word Problems)
C. Perceptual training
D. Adaptive Physical Education for Handicapped Children
E. Other subject areas in which the child is having trouble in the regular classroom.
F. Other _____

DIRECTIONS: Please circle either YES or NO after the following statements:

1.	Were the existing facilities adequate for a resource room?	YES	NO
2.	Was the approval of the County Study Team Supervisor obtained?	YES	NO
3.	Are all teachers in the resource room certified as "Teachers of the Handicapped"?	YES	NO
4.	Were in-service sessions held to acquaint and train resource room staff, professional and non-professional?	YES	NO
5.	Were there in-service sessions to prepare regular classroom teachers?	YES	NO
6.	Did the final resource plan receive the approval of the Board of Education?	YES	NO
7.	Does the resource room have a follow-up policy for children totally reintegrated into the regular classroom?	YES	NO
8.	Were parents informed about the resource room before it was implemented?	YES	NO
9.	Was it necessary to purchase additional instructional material and equipment over and beyond the normal yearly purchases?	YES	NO
10.	Are all materials and equipment inventoried and available for use by all professional staff?	YES	NO
11.	Are non-professional instructional help used in the resource room?	YES	NO
12.	Are student tutors used in the resource room?	YES	NO
13.	Are paid paraprofessionals used in the resource room?	YES	NO
14.	Are student-teachers from nearby colleges used in the resource room?	YES	NO